

## An Army Story.

In civil life, the good old days were at a time not nearer than 50 years apast; but in the service, a sun that rose ten years ago shone on a good old day. There are railroads now, and big garrisons near towns, and there are no Indians (as good old soldiers, understood Indians), and gambling is in discredit, and colonels whose orders are obscured by liquor fumes have decreased 98 per cent., and there are houses with every improvement instead of wall-tents and adobe huts, and the men have as many rights as women in Wyoming, and the officers have fresh oysters and don't pay a dollar a bottle for beer, and their wives have more interesting subjects to consider than each other's most sacredly private business—wherefore there is no longer war in time of peace. Nevertheless, 10, 15, 20 years ago—when all these things were not—was the good old time before the service had begun to go to the particular bow-wows.

This that I am going to tell happened in the good old days. It could not very well happen now, because, as I say, things have changed. At the time Betty Mandeville's father was in command at Apache and Betty was engaged to be married to an unusually fine fellow, whose name is not part of the story. He was a second lieutenant and he was in love, with all the beautiful disregard of the facts of life that is characteristic of the enamored state.

Of course the post knew of the engagement before either of the two most interested parties did. This was because this happened in the good old days. For the same reason—though it can occur sometimes even now—opinions on the match flew thick and fast and obscured the sky of charity. They said that the second lieutenant was making a fool of himself, which was the only unkind remark he felt heir to. But Betty fared worse. She came of a bad strain. There were things in the histories of both her parents that every one knew and no one was supposed to know. Her father was English and had been a jockey. He was the son of a concert-hall singer and a man whose only nobility was his birth.

Miss Mandeville, who was more Mexican than Spanish—bore a good Castilian name which covered a multitude of sins.

There were any number of Mandeville children younger than Betty, and all unmistakably favoring their swarthy mother. They were so dirty that they were a disgrace to the post. But Betty was tidy—as to dress—and was blonde; fluffily, curvily blonde, with a fine skin and innocent blue eyes and a rosebud mouth. It was said she looked like an English professional beauty; but there was no one to recognize the startling likeness to the concert-hall grandmother. She had a taste for laces, and hosiery, and high-heeled slippers, that may have been either a Spanish or theatrical inheritance. And she was beautiful beyond a question, with a beauty that was only skin deep.

After she had promised to marry the second lieutenant, Betty went down to Lowell to visit her aunt, who was her mother's sister and was the wife of Capt. Locke. Betty knew that she would enjoy herself more if the engagement were kept a secret. She could keep it quiet, because it was in the good old days and news traveled slowly and distances were great.

On the second day of her stay her aunt took her to stay over night with Senor Franquelo in Tucson. Which was the beginning.

The Franquelo family was large, and most of it dwelt in the one house—an adobe with the external whitewash broken off in oddly-shaped pieces, and built as all adobes were built in the good old days—one story around a courtyard. There was nothing in the courtyard but chickens and ollas—broken and otherwise—for the soil of Tucson is not fertile. Outside, where the narrow doorway faced upon the street, hardly less white under the burning sun than the whitened walls that lined it, a mocking-bird cage of willow hung against the house, with a red chile stuck between its bars. It was the first time Betty had been under the ancestral roof.

Besides her grandmother, who was more unpleasant than the aunts, there were many cousins, male and female. Of these, two—second cousins—were in love. They were Carlos and Ines. In less than ten minutes Carlos had deserted black-browed Ines and was languishing at Betty with his two soft eyes. Ines was openly wretched, Carlos openly infatuated, Betty openly flirting. But Carlos did not know that.

Betty and her aunt went back to Lowell the next day, and the same evening Carlos rode over to the post to see her.

There were six officers calling on Miss Mandeville, so Carlos sat apart and sulked; but he outstayed them all.

When they had gone, after a supper of canned oyster stew and tamales, he drew his chair close beside the sofa upon which Betty was half reclining.

"Why do you like those officers better than me?" he asked her.

"I don't," said Betty; "they're a bore."

"Do you not, truly?"

"Of course I don't; how could I?"

Carlos was not accustomed to Betty's like, and, as even those who should have known better, had believed her, because of her round, blue eyes, he was not to be blamed for his faith. "Would you rather talk to me?"

"A great deal rather."

"But why had I stayed so late that I must soon go?"

"It's not late. It's only half-past twelve. It would be too bad of you to go just when we begin to get a chance to settle down to a nice, cozy talk."

Carlos persisted coyly. "But you weel weesh to sleep."

"Very well," Miss Mandeville shrugged her shoulders, "then you had better go. Ines may get angry if you stay, and you like her more than you do me."

Carlos denied this in words that were neither kind nor just to Ines; but Betty damned her with faint praise.

She was not a clever conversationalist, nor was Carlos Franquelo, but they kept each other interested until very late, and when Carlos went home Betty stepped out to the front porch with him and put her hand in his, with the least bit of a pressure.

"Can I keep you?" Carlos asked, baldly.

"I suppose so—because we're cousins, you know," Betty assured him, as she raised her innocent face to his handsome Mexican one.

He whispered: "I love you, oh! I love you. You are beautiful, beautiful," and Betty laughed a little, and told him he was silly, when they had only known each other for two days.

Now, with Betty's beauty and other attractiveness, it was natural that she should have a great deal of attention from the bachelors, but Carlos' devotion was so marked that they drew off one by one, leaving the field pretty much to him. They resented Betty's permitting the young Mexican to follow her about incessantly, even though he were a second cousin. As for the girl, until it was too late she did not see the harm she was doing. Then all the officers had deserted her and there was only Carlos. Well, Carlos was handsome and good enough game, so she led him on.

It was not her fault, surely, that she didn't know the ways of Mexican lovers. She had told plenty of other men that she loved them, and nothing had happened. But one night she told this to Carlos at his urgent request, and the next day, at about "stable," as she was swinging lazily in the hammock on the porch, she saw three buggies, containing two men each, coming up the line. In the first sat Carlos and his brother, in the others, remoter male relatives.

Betty guessed the truth at once, and her pink cheeks turned white. She ran into the house, and screamed loudly for her uncle.

"Oh! Uncle Nat," she begged, when she found him in his room, "Carlos, and Jose, and all his nasty old relatives are coming here. Send them away, won't you? Please do." She clung to his arm.

"Why shall I send them away? Are they going to murder the poor little girl?"

"No, no, no. But I think they're going to ask you to let me marry them!"

"All of them?"

Betty lost her temper and flew into a white rage. "Stop your fool joking, and do what I say! You tell them I'm sick, and tell that—Carlos that I hate him!" She ran and hid just as the bell clanged.

Carlos found the captain, and made his demand in due form. The young lady's father not being there, he left that her uncle could take the place of a parent. He wished to ask the hand of his beautiful niece, knowing that she herself was willing to bestow it.

"How do you know that?" the captain asked.

"She tell me so."

"When?"

"Last night. She tell me dat she loved me, so to-day I come for to ask her from you."

"Are you sure she said she loved you, Franquelo?"

"Oh! yiss, sairintly. She kees me, also."

The captain left the room and went to find his niece. "Elizabeth, that fellow says that you told him you loved him. Did you?"

"The old fool!"

"Did you?"

"Supposing I did? He made me. He's an idiot to think I mean every little thing I say."

"Did you kiss him?"

"No."

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The captain's face cleared—then he bethought him of the ways of women. "Did you let him kiss you?"

"Perhaps, I don't know."

He caught her hand. "Come in here to Franquelo and explain yourself. You'd better say you'll marry him after that proceeding."

Betty was frightened. Her defiance changed to pleading. "Please don't make me see him, Uncle Nat, dear. Please."

"Come on."

"But Uncle Nat, I can't say I'll marry him. I was only fooling. I'm engaged to another man."

Capt. Locke dropped her hand and returned to the sitting-room.

"Franquelo," he said, coldly, for he disliked his nephew sincerely. "I regret that this unpleasant thing should have happened to you under my roof. My niece tells me that she was not in earnest, and she is soon to marry another man. However, she will not stay another day with me to trouble you or anyone else. I shall send her home tonight."

Carlos' face, as he silently left the room, was an ugly sight.

Betty was sitting sulkily in the waiting-room at the Tucson station about 7:30 o'clock the same night. Her uncle was seeing to the checking of her trunk outside. When he came back, a man whom he recognized even in the late twilight as Carlos Franquelo ran past him, toward a horse that stood in the street a few yards away; and, going hurriedly to where he had left his niece, he found her lying full length on the floor and dead. Her yellow curls were wet and dark with blood, and her face was quite disfigured because the pistol had been held close to it.

When the news was broken to the second lieutenant, he called Providence a great many hard names. Which is frequently all the thanks Providence gets for doing us a good turn.—San Francisco Argonaut.

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